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THE
GUIDE
TO
COMICS





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DECEMBER 1991



ABOUT OUR COVER

Batman agreed to hold still long enough in between takes from the movie *Batman & Robin Returns* for us to snap him for our cover. If we could only have convinced him to wear the hat, though...



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Welcome To Wizard #4

Hey, how ya doin'? What a crazy month this has been, I've been running around trying to do a million and one things, the worst of which is talking to Lawyers. What a pain.

I do hope that you are getting psyched for the new Trek film. Star Trek VI opens in two months, as you can see, me and this green blooded alien with inner eyelids are most excellent buds.

Results have been tallied, 'Seinfeld' is officially my #1 show, just edging out 'Parker Lewis Can't Lose'. Also, have you seen the cover to She-Hulk #34? I think I'm in love - Where can I find a girl like that? (color optional)

Vacation time, well at least out of the office, Nov 9th & 10th, Wizard will be at the Mid-Ohio Con to do a little magic. we will show some top secret future stuff, answer all your questions (within reason), just say hello, and have some fun, maybe give away a few things.



I would like you to write me some more letters, let me know how we're doing—I'll be honest with you, if you give us some good ideas, we'll get it done. We threw the red tape into the woods in my back yard.

The comic book industry lost a piece of its backbone, with the passing of Carol Kalish. Publisher of Marvel I've met her a few times, mostly at the San Diego Comic Con, we shared a few cabs and elevator rides. I'm sorry I didn't get a chance to be more enlightened by her presence.

Truly yours,

Goreb Shamus
Publisher

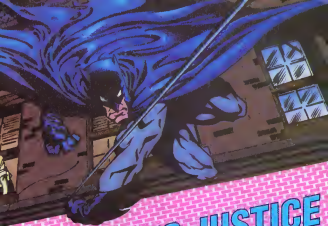
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PURSUING JUSTICE in a DARK KNIGHT

THE BART SEARS INTERVIEW

by Patrick Daniel O'Neill

A. B. WAS HERE

Artist Burt Sears first came to fan attention as the penciller on DC Comics' *Justice League Europe*. Now, he's making a splash with a story arc in *Legends of the Dark Knight* and moving on to draw the wrap-around for next year's DC annals.

WIZARD: *Where do you come from? Where did you get your education?*

BART SEARS: I'm from Syracuse, NY. I'm mostly self-taught; I went through one year of the Joe Kubert School of Cartoon and Graphic Art. After that, I pretty much got out of drawing. After a while, I went into computer graphics and slipped into comics. I did some stuff for Marvel that was never printed; probably never will. They were for the revised version of *Savage Tales*, not super-hero stuff.

WIZARD: *How did you get started working for DC?*

SEARS: I was working at Hasbro at the time. I designed the

“The Justice League have to be open and airy; sort of pseudo beautiful people”

C.O.P.S. toys and DC had licensed them for a comic book. Andy Helfer and Doug Moench came up to talk to the marketing people; I was friendly with one of the marketing guys, so he let me come to the meeting. They liked the drawings I had for C.O.P.S. and asked if I wanted to do comics. I said yes, and that I already had. I showed them some covers I did for Quality — *Judge Dredd* — and Andy gave me a couple of issues of C.O.P.S. to do.

Then I quit Hasbro and started doing comics full-time.

WIZARD: *That's interesting. I always thought that toy design would be more profitable than working in comics.*

SEARS: Nope. It can be if you do it on a freelance basis, but not on staff.





**“With ‘Faith’
I tried to draw it
in a grittier style.”**

After C.O.P.S., I did an issue of *The Spectre* and missed the chance to do that title regularly when I got roped into helping out on the last issue of *Invasion*. Then I jumped on to *Justice League Europe*.

WIZARD: *JLE* impresses me as a tough book—trying to balance humor, characterization, and enough action to satisfy everybody.

SEARS: Sometimes you can get bogged down in the dialogue...but I think it had a pretty good balance — more so than *Justice League America*.

WIZARD: Did you enjoy working on it?

SEARS: At times. There were always scheduling problems with that book. It seemed like I was always catching up — and I'm not the fastest guy to begin with. It got to be a pain in the butt.

I liked *JLE*. I wish I'd had the chance to actually see Europe, because I really have no idea what it really looks like. I had pitiful reference. It's tough to find reference for normal streets, cars, mail boxes, that kind of day-to-day stuff.

WIZARD: You currently have "Faith" running in *Legends of the Dark Knight*. Is Batman a character you've hankered after?

SEARS: He's dark and fun to draw, but I wouldn't say I ever begged for him.



I was always supposed to do a special project — it just turned out to be a *Dark Knight* story. At first, years ago, it was going to be a *Cropper* series, but that never went anywhere. Finally, "Faith" came along — and that was its own little nightmare.

WIZARD: In what sense?

SEARS: Time-wise — I got a slow start and I got it late besides. The third issue's the best.

I tried to draw it in a different style than *JLE The Justice League* have to be open

and airy; that's how they work best — sort of pseudo-beautiful people, I guess. But with "Faith," I tried to make it grittier.

WIZARD: What's next?

SEARS: I'm doing a couple of issues of *JLA*, #758 and 59; then after that I start on two 54-page *Eclipse* books. That's going to be next summer's annuals storyline. That'll take me a while.

WIZARD: Who are you working with on *Eclipse*?

SEARS: Keith Giffen, Robert Loren Fleming and Randy Elliott.

WIZARD: Is Keith doing layouts?

SEARS: Yes, but I won't be following them. We're having a lunch this week, where I'll make that clear. I'm going to see what he

wants on each page and then re-draw it.

That's not what I did on the *Justice League* stuff. I'd occasionally do bigger panels than he laid out, to emphasize drama or action, but mostly I stuck pretty close to his layout. I found that the way he tells stories is pretty straight-forward, and if you change too much, you change the tone of the story. That might be fine, but the dialogue was being written at the same time I did the pencils, so I didn't want to screw that up. Besides, those books had such a style and

tone, I didn't want to change it.

On *Krypton*, I'm going to bring in a little more of the stuff I used in "Faith."

WIZARD: If you were in a position to change the nature of comics — the industry, the business, or comics themselves — what would you do? What most needs to be fixed?

SEARS: There's probably a lot of small things, but no one major thing — maybe the hold that DC and Marvel have on the industry is a little too strong. Especially Marvel at this point. ☉



...it was a Dark and Stormy Knight...

Denny O'Neil
discusses the nature
of Batman...
and there won't be
a single **POW!** or
HOLY ANYTHING! in the
conversation.

by
Patrick Daniel O'Neill





My theory is that there have been about five Batmans," says editor Denny O'Neil, "and I don't have any quarrel with any one of them. They were all right for their time, for the sensibility of the audience — or the perceived sensibility of the audience."

O'Neil edits *Batman* and *Detective Comics*, two of the three regular monthly titles in which the Caped Crusader stars. (The third, *Legends of the Dark Knight*, presents stories from early in Batman's career and is edited by Andy Helfer.) O'Neil is often credited as the writer who — along with artist Neal Adams — returned Batman to his roots after the camp period inspired by the TV series in the late 1960s. He says that Batman is basically the same character now, 20 years later, as the one he wrote then.



I don't think the character is different," O'Neil says. "He's deeper — what we started in the '60s has been carried a lot further, partially because it's possible to go further now. When we did the stuff that people keep wanting to reprint — and God bless them! — from the '60s, we worked under a lot of restrictions, some of them from outside agencies, some of them from inside, some of them coming I'm afraid just from our own perception of what the limitations were."

I don't think it would have been possible to do the stories we now routinely do in 1971, but I don't see that there is any significant change in the character — just that we can go further with him."

Q But there must have been some changes in 20 years? "I confess that there was a period of seven

or eight years where I read Batman only sporadically," O'Neil admits. "After I stopped writing the character, I read Batman comics only when there was a need to. I have a feeling he lightened up a bit in there. I did read the year or so before I started editing the books — the previous year's run. One of the things I wanted to do was darken that character a little bit; he seemed almost too wholesome, too '50s-ish."

But I think basically the character is not different, just more of the same. The Batman who was re-established in the late '60s is essentially the same character we're doing now."

That character is a grim, dark, somewhat obsessed man, driven to fight crime by the memory of his parents' murder, O'Neil notes that Batman "can be become a bit much, if the wrong elements in his psyche are played up. I think some

writer-artist teams have made the character unappealing by removing all his humanity. You make him a psycho, as some people have wanted to do, and you have an unappealing character. I think there has to be an essential streak of humanity running through the character, and I will always reject the idea that he is a psycho — because I have some ideas about what heroes are and crazy people are not heroes. A hero has to have some control over his own destiny."

But isn't obsession a form of psychosis? O'Neil argues that Bruce Wayne isn't crazy because he recognizes his obsession and uses it for prosocial purposes. "In our sort of psychological picture of Batman, we posit that he knows that he has an obsession — he's aware of it — but he

chooses not to fight the obsession because he's an existential man," he points out. "We all need something to give a meaning to our life; with most people it's family, with some people it's job. Most people don't even think about that, they accept what they're handed. Family is the thing that gives meaning to your life and this is the way it's always been. Batman knows that he got snared by an obsession and chooses to let that be the governing principle of his life, because he can't think of anything better. At least, it's a very socially useful obsession to have."

Some fans argue that we haven't seen enough of Bruce Wayne in the past few years, that the concentration on Batman's obsession has led to neglect of his un-costumed life. After all, they say, he was Bruce Wayne for 20 years before he became Batman. To some extent, O'Neil rejects that argument:

He wasn't Bruce Wayne for 20 years before he was Batman; he became Batman at age eight. He didn't have the

name or all the gimmicks in place, but we're saying that he was a child named Bruce Wayne up until he saw his parents killed," he explains. "Then that innocent child stopped existing and Batman began there. It took him another 15 years to get it all together."



However, the criticism that Wayne has been neglected is a valid one. The problem may be some lack of consensus on who Bruce Wayne is or how he should come off. At times he's been played as a completely competent, admirable business-



man; I don't think that's ever the way to go with double-identity characters. Actually, I like the way he was played in the movie: a nice, unfocused guy.

We have given Bruce Wayne a little romance, but he has not been on stage as much as he has in times past. So, next month in London, when I meet with all my writers, I'll mention that to them," O'Neil concludes.

O'Neil admits that the recent emphasis on Batman's life in the cowl may have been an over-reaction to what he sees as past mistakes. "In times past, there was too much soap opera. That was another thing I determined to do when I took over this desk almost six years ago—go back to the creature-of-the-night, hard-edged adventure stories, the old pulp adventures; less soap opera," he says. "My perception is that Batman turns more as a character, as a concept, on the pulp adventure than on the soap opera. That's by no means true of all super-heroes; it just seems true of this one. It's possible we went too far in that direction."





O'Neil points out that he tries to give his writers, Alan Grant and Peter Milligan, a fairly free hand in determining the kind of stories they tell. "I am working with a uniquely talented group of guys and it's sometimes hard for me to find the line. I don't want to inhibit them by giving them a lot of prima facie requirements. What they are—all of them at the moment—are gifted storytellers, and only secondarily guys working in comics with senile characters. I want to make the best possible use of their storytelling talents, and put as few restrictions on them as possible. As it is, they have to work from an outline, which we get together once a year and create—which tells us, for example, this year when Gordon has his heart attack, what effect that has, what issues of which books those repercussions are felt in. Similar problems with Tim's parents, with introducing Harold into the continuity. So they have to work with that stuff—mostly, frankly, because the audience demands that kind

of continuity.

"Given that they have to work with that, I don't like laying too many other restrictions on them," O'Neil continues. "Of course, there are the overall restrictions: There are kinds of stories I won't let them do—a lot of the stories that were done in the '50s, for

example, are simply off limits now. We don't do much hard-core science fiction, we do very little fantasy; we do a lot of occult, but no elves or sprites from another dimension, none of that sort of thing.

"So, actually, running it as loosely as I do, there's a lot of restrictions I have to put on them—many more than I used to work under when I was writing Batman freelance in the '60s and the '70s."

**"You make him
A HERO HAS
a psycho,
TO CONTROL
and you have an
HIS OWN
unappealing
DESTINY.
character."**

Surprisingly, both Grant and Milligan are British. Is O'Neil concerned that as quintessentially an American character as Batman is being written by a pair of Brits? "I think there are reasons for it," he replies. "One is my perception that Batman functions best

in a pulp adventure format. Those guys come from a little different tradition than most American comic-book writers, in that they tend to be writers first and comic-book guys second. As such, they're more concerned with things like structure within an individual story — whereas the American breed of comic-book writer, not wrongly let me emphasize, tends to think of three-year stretches. Well, for Batman, I think it's better to concentrate on finite stories, a story with a beginning, middle and end. We may take three issues to tell it, but it should play as if each little drama comes to a real conclusion.

There are always the continuing threads, the subplots, that will go on forever," he points out. "That's time-honored in comics and, in fact, in serial fiction in general. 'And serial fiction is the dominant form of the 20th Century', he said, sounding like an academic. But it is. Norman Mailer, 20 or 25 years ago, said melodrama is the dominant form — well, he was half right. Melodramatic serials are the dominant form because, really, that's what our popular story-telling has been about since the early part of this century: comic strips, pulp magazines that featured the same characters in different adventures once or twice a month, radio serials, television programs. You know, Thomas Magnum catches this crook on this occasion, but when you think back over the eight years of Magnum P.I., you don't remember the individual stories as much as the on-going elements — the car, the estate, Higgins, the dogs.

So, we're working in the serial form and that brings its own requirements — one of which is certain on-going elements that you play with and manipulate, but are always there," O'Neil sums up. "Or — if they stop

**"It's a major
profit in the
series when
you muck
with any
of the
basics."**



being there — it becomes a real big deal. It's a major, pivotal point in the series when you muck with any of the basics of the concept."

Batman is one of a multitude of "dark" char-

"Batman turns more as a character/concept on the pulp adventure."

acters that seem to be the driving influence in comics today — a multitude that includes Lobo, the Punisher, Foolkiller and, to some extent, Wolverine. Does O'Neil have any thoughts as to why these types of characters are dominating the comic-book scene?


I 'm afraid the only answer I have is the obvious one: Popular culture, popular fiction, almost always mirrors the preoccupations of its audience," he answers. "And I don't think anybody's too optimistic at the moment. Certainly I'm not. I'm hoping for a miracle, because I think that's



what it will take. The miracle might be that everybody will come to their senses tomorrow morning, and by 6 a.m. the world will stop doing all the nutty stuff we're doing.

B ut I don't see things getting better; I may be a congenital cynic and pessimist, but even talking to nice people in the Midwest, there's no mood of optimism," he notes. "I think the characters who are currently popular are simply reflecting what's out there. In the movies, the defining notion of a hero seems to be a talent for wholesale slaughter. Again, I don't think that's being a hero and it cheapens the dramatic value of violence. Ideally, violence is a release of tension in the dramatic structure — if not, then it's pornography, it's





...you're run for sensation's sake. And in most of the movies I see, violence is not used as tension release—the slaughter begins as early as the first scene, goes as possible and continues until the end. That can be very entertaining if the slaughter is done with wit, but it's bad drama and ultimately it deprives us of a very valuable tool."

After nearly 30 years in comics, having passed the half-century mark in his own life, Denny O'Neil considers what his future holds. "Some day, I'm going to retire from doing this, and think about all this stuff we've been discussing—popular culture, the nature of serial fiction. I'd really like to get it all sorted out in my head. There's not much time to do that when you're fighting deadlines day to day." ☐



Andy Mangel's

Hollywood Heroes

Welcome to Wizard's newest column! Each month in "Hollywood Heroes," I'll be focusing on the growing number of comic book projects coming from Hollywood. In future columns, I'll review comic book/movie scripts or as-yet-unreleased movies, spotlight an actor or writer, and give you updates from Hollywood on the latest projects forthcoming!

First time out, let's review a troubled Marvel film which

can't seem to get American distribution. Though already out on video in Europe and in some Spanish theaters in California, *Captain America* remains the "unreleasable" movie no American distributor will touch! *Captain America* is a 21st Century Film, starring Matt Salinger (son of writer J.D. Salinger) as the title hero. Kim Gillingham has his mother/daughter girlfriends, Bernie and Sharon Stewart, Scott Paulin as the very Italian Red Skull, and *Superman* star Ned Beatty as reporter Sam Kolawetz.

The *Captain America* screenplay is by Stephen Tolkin, based on an earlier draft by Lawrence F. Block. Albert Pyun directs, and Menahem Golan is the producer. The finished film is 94 minutes long, rated PG.

The film begins in Portoforno, Italy in 1936, where a young master pianist, Todzio De Santis is about to be kidnapped by the Nazis for part of an invidious experiment. Dr. Vosari, realizing too late that her untested super-soldier formula is about to be used on an unwilling boy, breaks out of the Italian castle and flees to America.

There, fate links her up with Steve Rogers, a



scrappy 4-F who will be the first person to test her now-hopefully-perfected serum. As in the comics, Steve grows muscles and super-strength, but is unable to prevent the assassination of the good doctor. Shortly thereafter, he's sent on his first mission as Captain America: to stop an experimental rocket the Red Skull (whom we find out is the altered Tadzio) has aimed at America!

Unfortunately, Steve doesn't quite succeed. He's overpowered by the Skull, strapped to the rocket, and shot off towards America. At the last moment, Cap manages to change

the rocket's course, and he and the rocket are buried in Canada's frozen wastes. The only testament to his struggle is the young Nick Kimball, who witnessed the struggle through his parents' telephoto cameras lens.

In 1988, Nick Kimball has become President, and a Canadian-German oil team finds the frozen Captain America. He defrosts, and miraculously lives, but mistaking the German surveyors for Nazis, Cap splits for California. Along the way he meets newspaper reporter Sam Kolawetz, and eventually finds his way to the side of a now-much older Bernie Rosenzthal and her lookalike daughter, Sharon. Unfortunately, the Red Skull (now a big businessman) has sent his perfect children, Sergio and Antonella,



SPOTLIGHT

ON:

STEPHEN TOLKIN

Not many people know who Stephen Tolkin is, since his only work has been on *Masters of the Universe* and *Captain America*. With studios saying that *Captain America* is "unprofessional and unreleasable," it will doubtlessly hurt Tolkin's writing career when the movie is eventually released. To his credit, Tolkin's script is a satisfying and enjoyable read, but, unfortunately, little of his script actually made it to the screen. With luck, Tolkin will rebound from the movie and write some more promising scripts. Enjoy these excerpts from a longer interview with Stephen:

On how he got involved with *Captain America*: "I did a rewrite of *Masters of the Universe*, very little of which was used. I think they felt that if it had been my script which was shot it would have not been such a disaster. I was the guy who could have somehow saved *Masters*, so they said 'Let's give *Captain America* to him now.'"

On writing under pressure: "I started the script in the spring of 1987. They gave me a month to write it. They told me 'We must start shooting June 20, 1987.' I finished it and they didn't start shooting until basically June, 1989."

On his short role as a photographer in the movie: "I'm there, big as life. When I saw it last night, I wanted to crawl under a chair."

On *Captain America* as a leftist superhero: "He stands for the real American ideal—question authority, stand up for the right no matter what it is—as opposed to the bogus American ideal of just flags and colors."

On director Albert Pyun: "No comment."

to bring *Captain America* back to him.

The Skull has many insidious plans; he was also behind the deaths of both Kennedys, Martin Luther King Jr., and John Lennon, as well as every other hero *America* has had. Though counter-balanced by the non-caring yuppie attitudes of Sharon, Steve Rogers (with the help of Sam Kewitz's files) slowly unravels the Skull's master plans. Now he must stop the Skull before the President, Nick Kimball, is brainwashed and destroyed.

Cap, along with tag-along Sharon, then makes an off-times silly and completely contrived assault on the

Red Skull's Italian castle stronghold in scenes that are highly reminiscent of Disney's super-hero parody, *Condorman*. Coincidence and reality-jarring occurrences abound. Can Cap defeat the menace to the free world with a 1930s tape player? Will he get the girl and save the President? What do you think?

In the original script, *Captain America* was an exciting ride, although the Skull and his children's scenes tended to drag. What was most fascinating was the man-out-of-time aspects of Steve Rogers and the political theories and intrigue banded about between the players.

However, writer Tolkin was dreaming if he thought some of the political views would survive unscathed. The film, as poorly directed by Albert Pyun, is a disappointing and lackluster affair, dragging in any scene without action, and sometimes in scenes with action! Cap's much-maligned rubber costume doesn't really look bad on screen though; it's only in pictures that you can see his ears are rubber. Still, it doesn't look as good as *The Flash* suit, and Cap's not in it often enough for the film.

Robbed of its strongest elements, it's no wonder this *Captain America* isn't slinging his shield in American theaters. Perhaps it's for the better, though. In a country where civil rights and freedom of speech and the press are being trampled by governmental officials in hob-nail boots, this *Captain America* seems more out of place than ever. Maybe that's why it's still a fantasy.



The character of Batman is easy to identify with, as he is a human with no special abilities that he has not given himself. Bruce Wayne is not an alien from space who has super powers, nor does he have a special gene that has given him any special ability or power beyond the range of normal human abilities. The story of an orphan whose family met a tragic death, yet who became highly successful financially and able to provide himself with state-of-the-art technology and computer equipment, is a statement to everyone that "you too, can be tremendously successful and have tremendous power and control over your own life."

While Batman has a 50-plus year history, entire decades of the character's past have been jettisoned in recent years, following DC's "Crisis" that realigned its comic-book universe. Gone are his Golden Age adventures, written by Bill Finger and drawn by creator Bob Kane and his assistant Jerry Robinson; gone too are the science-fiction tales of the '50s. Now, Batman's history essentially begins in 1964, with the introduction of the "New Look" under editor Julius Schwartz. But even in that 25-year history, there are segments that have been dropped or rewritten, post-Crisis. Certainly the camp era that surrounded the *Batman* TV series is ignored, and even the immediate pre-Crisis introduction of the second Robin, Jason Todd, was re-written. In many ways, Batman's story in comics today begins with one work: *The Dark Knight Returns* by Frank Miller.

The "grim and gritty" angle that Frank Miller added to the character has been an influence on the comic book art form that is still being felt today. The "grittiness" made Batman more realistic and believable as our society

has become more violent and tragic, and the technology of the news media has been able to bring the violence and tragedy of the real world right into our homes at dinner time. As Batman's parents were murdered by a criminal, and he encounters terrible crimes on a daily basis, it seems almost logical that he would be disturbed, depressed, and angered.

This "grimness" angle on Batman was applied inside the realm of the comic book, and adapted to the film version of Batman, which went on to become one of the most successful movies in history. All comic-book fans should be terribly proud and aware that their art form of the comic book influenced pop American culture to the degree that Frank Miller has. In fact, this "grit-

tiness" has been so successful and well-received on Batman that DC has rushed to blindly retro-fit "grittiness" to other DC characters, even ones for whom "grittiness" is totally inappropriate and destructive to the history and personality of the character, such as Hal Jordan.

Alan Moore added a tremendous psychological perspective to the relationship between Batman and the Joker in *The Killing Joke*. Any discussion of Batman without mention of this psychological thriller, beautifully illustrated by Brian Bolland, does the character injustice. Thanks primarily to Alan Moore and Frank Miller, and their involvement with Batman, the comic form has become psychological and introspective as well as remaining external and villain-oriented, and has gained much in the process.

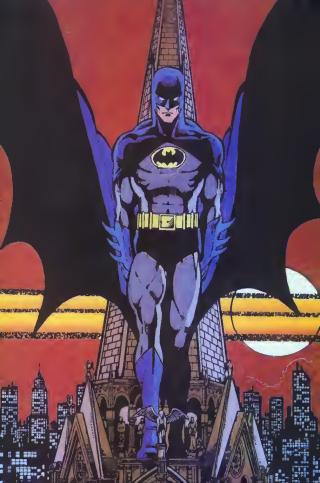
Shortly after the 1989 *Batman* movie was released, DC began a third Batman book, *Legends of the Dark Knight*. Creatively,

DEFINING THE



DARK KNIGHT

by Henry T. Colonna III





LOTDK has been fresh and exciting, with writers such as Denny O'Neil, Grant Morrison, Doug Moench, and Mike Barr churning out consistently strong and well-written stories, with pencils and computer-assisted coloring that take full advantage of the higher quality paper of the book. O'Neil's "Shaman" was very careful in its characterization of a younger Bruce Wayne and a younger Batman. Morrison's "Gothic" was supernatural horror. Moench's "Prey" took an in-depth look at the seriously disturbed Hugo Strange with astonishing art and coloring by Paul Gulacy and Terry Austin. Billed over and over as being "controversial" by DC, O'Neil's "Venom" has been the series' only real failure. It glossed over the real problems of drug abuse by not showing a

withdrawal scene that would have been crucial to the story, and seemed to pat itself on the back for its stance against drug use, rather than show us any real insight into the problem. "Fear" was written by Mike Barr (who has one of the best feels for Batman in the business), with popular artist Bart Sears, whose work is unfortunately muddled a bit by too-dense colors.

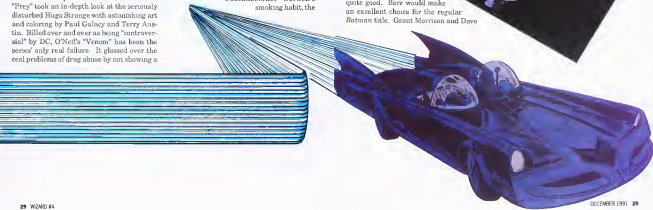
Batman and Detective, however, have been of much more inconsistent quality. While Marv Wolfman gave us "A Lonely Place of Dying" close to the time the movie was released, there has yet to be a really good Batman story in either title since, with the only possible exception being "Dark Knight, Dark City" from Peter Milligan last summer. It has been widely recognized among the readership lately that there has been too much emphasis on the supernatural, and too little of the detective Batman. Also missing are underlying plots and intermingled continuity. Certainly there are a few ongoing themes, such as Commissioner Gordon's smoking habit, the

development of Tim Drake, and Bruce's dating of Vicki Vale. Over in the *Superman* books, however, there must be a dozen different plots going that the writers are mangling with in every single issue of the different titles. The subplots are paced well enough that there is important advancement and nothing is totally lost. Underlying and multiple plots are successful devices used in comic books (just ask Chris Claremont), movies, and even soap operas. Why DC can so successfully co-mingle the *Superman* titles but barely even try with the regular *Batman* books is hard to understand.

Some of the *Batman* one-shots and miniseries have definitely been more successful than the monthlies. Mike Barr's *Full Circle* was masterful in its adding to the continuity without hype. Indeed, for all the *Batman* stories that have promised new angles on Batman's origin and not done a very good job of it, this story delivered that new angle without any hype or promise. His *Bride of the Demon* graphic novel from last year was also quite good. Barr would make an excellent choice for the regular *Batman* title. Grant Morrison and Dave

McKean delivered the most successful hard-cover comic of all time with *Arkham Asylum*. Though some readers felt it was too difficult, while others found it brilliant, most everyone agrees that the Dave McKean look at *Batman* on such high-quality paper was worth the price of the book by itself. The upcoming

Predator mini-series and *Batman/Dracula* hard-back look very promising as well. ☐



JOHN BYRNE

II



MUTANTS AREN'T EVERYTHING (SORRY, CHARLIE!)

by Patrick Daniel O'Neill

Last month, writer/artist John Byrne discussed his feelings on returning to *X-Men* as scripter, after 11 years away from the title. But Byrne has more than just mutant irons in the fire, and taking on the dialogue duties for Professor Xavier's charges will mean some changes in those assignments as well.

"I'm already phasing off *Iron Man*, which was planned all along," he told WIZARD. "I've got about a story and a half left to do there; somewhere around #278 or #279 I will have told all the *Iron Man* stories I came on board to tell in the first place. Plus the two elements that enticed me onto the book in the first place—Howard Mackie as editor and John Romita Jr. as artist—are no longer part of the package. While I'm perfectly happy with the people who are replac-

ing them, the incentive to stay beyond my announced tenure is much diminished. And the coming of extra work, like the *X-Men*, diminishes it even further."

Byrne's other major Marvel assignments are *Namor*, *the Sub-Mariner* and *The Sensational She-Hulk*. Will his ability to continue on those books be affected? No, he says. "As far as *Namor* is concerned, I've already planned that #25 is the last one I will pencil. I intend to remain as plotter and scripter. At this stage, Rick Leonardi will be the penciler. There is a little bit less work I'll be doing and that basically adds up to the equivalent of the amount of the work I'll be doing on the two *X* books."

"I've been telling people that the best thing



about doing the X books is the ton of cash that automatically comes with it," he laughs. "That subsidizes the lesser projects. It subsidizes *She-Hulk* for me. I can now do *She-Hulk* and not have to worry about whether *She-Hulk* will pay my mortgage — which isn't very likely — because the X-Men are going to pay my mortgage."

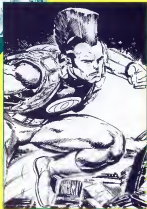
Despite Byrne's enthusiasm for

able to sell. Not since the Golden Age, when it didn't sell all that well, either."

Byrne is uncertain why the Sub-Mariner is such a difficult concept to get across to the comics public. "Once upon a time I would have said, 'All this underwater stuff is just boring....'" he notes. "We didn't do the underwater stuff and the sales still plummeted. Maybe it's the lack of a flashy costume. I've been giving serious thought to the idea of putting him back in the shark-skin thing."

"Everybody else's reaction was 'Hey, John Byrne's going to do it; it'll sell billions!' My reaction was, 'I dunno. We'll see.' Unfortunately, my reaction was nearer the mark. The good thing is I get to continue with it; if the X-Men thing hadn't come along, I might have had to give up the book all together and go in search of a more profitable venture, since I do have this mortgage."

But not all of Byrne's endeavors are published with a Marvel logo in the upper left corner. He has a major project in the works for DC, as well — the history of the Green Lantern Corps, based on a plot by science-fiction writer Larry Niven. "I'm scripting and drawing it; it's basically a history of the Green Lantern Corps, done sideways, that puts all the foolishness that's slowly been stuck into the concept over the years and re-



Namor, he recognizes that it is not the kind of success that a career can be built on. "Its sales are what I consider pretty bad — it struggles to hit 100,000," he admits. "Back when I was doing X-Men the first time around, 100,000 was nice and comfortable and everybody was thrilled if they did 100,000. In fact, X-Men was selling 145,000 when I left it, which was considered pretty strong. These days, 100,000 means you go direct-only. It isn't financially viable to do a newsstand book that isn't selling 100,000."

"Which is sad," Byrne comments. "It doesn't really surprise me. I knew going into it that Namor is a book that nobody's ever been

works it and recalibrates it," he says. "It's an interesting project. It starts from the easiest take in the world — 'Everything is a lie' — and then it comes up with this wonderful reason why everything is a lie. It's beautifully logical; only Larry Niven could be so smart as to come up with this perfect reason why everything we know about the Green Lantern Corps and the Guardians is a lie."

And branching away from the Big Two, Byrne has a creator-owned project on the boards at Dark Horse: *Next Men*. "I anticipated that being a slightly confusing title when I came up with it," he chuckles. "Now I'm envisioning myself at conventions and having to ask everybody to repeat what they say when they ask me a question: 'What are you doing next on *X-Men*?'"

"Excuse me, *Next Men*?"

"*X-MEN*."

"I never thought I would be the one confused by it."

Byrne says the creation of these characters had its genesis in time — specifically a realization of his own aging process. "Last year I had my 40th birthday, just past I had my 41st birthday, and I've been very aware since my 40th birthday that I'm now the same age that Stan Lee was when he created the *Fantastic Four* with Jack Kirby. Jack was 45 and Stan was 41. So I'm in a window now between those ages in which I figure I have to create the 'Fantastic Four,' if I'm going to be anything more than a footnote in the history of the comic-book industry."

"And that's basically what the *Next Men* is — my attempt to create the *Fantastic Four* Stan sat down and said, 'Here's all the stuff as it's been for years — I'm gonna turn it sideways.' I'm now trying to do the same thing, to reinvent the wheel as it were, and say, 'Here's my take on everything we've ever seen of the basic super-hero genre.'"

Byrne sees this as a chance to take a fresh look and get a fresh start on the very basics of superheroes. "It's a tremendously appealing thing for me because I've been experiencing a growing frustration in the last four or five years. It's probably four or five years that I've been explaining and groaning to people about this — that there are now, because of the structure of the Marvel and DC Universes, so many stories we simply cannot do. We cannot do the first alien contact story, for example, as a real simple, basic comic-book story. It's not only been done — it's been done 27 times. You can't do the first time-travel story; you can't do magic other than how magic has been established in those universes."

"So the idea of having a virgin universe in which none of this stuff has ever been done and in which these five guys are the first beings with super-powers ever to come along is just terrific."

He describes his new heroes as "like mutants, only they're not. I took as my starting point that





A BRIEF BYRNE

each would have a single super-ability and each of the super-abilities would be based on things that people can do. We don't have anybody with wings, or anybody who turns into fire. We have a guy who's really strong, a guy who's really fast, a girl who's really athletic, a guy with really great eyes who can see the whole electromagnetic spectrum, and a gal who's indestructible — tougher than dirt.

"That's where I start, with these five characters who — because of the nature of the first story — have no awareness of the real world and are suddenly thrust into the real world," he continues. "So they're dealing with the real world while the real world is busy dealing with them. And it's got all these secret government





PORTFOLIO MAP

projects. I had to start somewhere. You know, there are only two origins in the whole world, so I picked the "secret government project" origin. I break down all the origin stories in comics as either technological or non-technological. Superman or Batman — you're either blasted away from a doomed planet or your parents are killed by bad guys. That's pretty much all you've got."

In closing, Byrne says he is "depressed" by the current state of the comics industry. "I really don't like the direction we're going...I'm going to alienate everybody who buys my books now," he comments. "The direction we're going in terms of the power the fans have over what is produced bothers me. It's an indirect power because they can't actually walk into the office and say,



GEEWHOO!!

"The best thing about the X-books is the cash that comes with it. That subsidizes the lesser products."

'Do this.' But marketing is constantly aware of what sold and what didn't and why. The whole approach these days seems to be not at all story oriented; it's all event-oriented. 'Which event can we cook up this year that will sell a ton of books?' That's what Spider-Man #1 and X-Force #1 and X-Men #1 and all these plastic-wrapped, multiple-cover hoo-has are about: They're events. And the contents of the book are utterly unimportant.

"Consider Spider-Man #1 as an example. I like Todd's stuff, so this is not intended to be a diminishing of Todd McFarlane or his work, but they sold 3.5 million copies of that thing, sight unseen. Which means the fans were buying it without knowing what they were going to get: Todd could have been experimenting with his new stick-figure style for all they knew," he laughs. "But they bought 3.5 million copies of it. Then, of course, Marvel realized it was a money machine."

Additionally, Byrne says, the industry is stagnating—not because of an emphasis on super-heroes but because no one is experimenting with the genre. "People who dismiss the super-hero genre are like people who dismiss westerns as far as I'm concerned," he notes. "The western is dead." No—it just takes somebody to come along and do something different with the western. People certainly woke up when Alan Moore did Watchmen, because he did something different—or something that was perceived as different, which is perhaps a better evaluation.

"I'd like to see anything and everything being done in comics. But my own personal first love is the super-hero genre and I want to explore the super-hero genre in different ways. That's partly what Next Men is all about, coming at this same thing from a different direction." ☺

X-FORCING THE ISSUE with FABIAN NICIEZA

by Patrick Daniel O'Neill

It's dark, it's grim, it's gritty. We must be talking. Scripter Fabian Nicieza, a somewhat cynical that comes from the about.

"The whole ap-
liefeld and I
it, is based on
regarding
"Essen-
war of-
How it
are

— It's a mutant title about X-Force, right? admits that the book has air about it, but he says heart of what X-Force is

proach to the book, that Rob discussed, and my approach to several articles and books I read young people and war," he says. tially reality-based material on how facts teenagers over a period of time affects 14- and 15-year-olds when they being asked to fight. I've been reading some articles in Time Magazine on the Children of War. They're all very hard-edged and basically very cynical."

That outlook has led to a fiercer approach to dialogue, Nicieza point out. "I notice that I write more dialogue in New Warriors than in X-Force. In New Warriors, they enjoy talking to each other. The X-Force characters don't seem to enjoy talking to each other as much yet. They understand that what they have chosen to do is not exactly open to conversation. I don't see them sitting around talking about Magnum, P.I. like they used to (in New Mutants). It's more about the fighting they are doing."

"It may be considered grim and is certainly a different approach for me," he admits.

But Nicieza denies that X-Force can be seen as part of a trend toward darker concepts in comics. "I don't even know if I would call it a trend," he argues. "Let's say it's a more visceral approach to the characters, in that they do not pretend to be heroes or they do not preach about what they do. Does X-Force fall into that category? I guess it does — I mean their leader comes around a big I-don't-know-what-the-heck-it-does gun and they're willing to blow people away if they have to."

"Part of their charm, if you will, is that they're not out to apprehend the bad guys," Nicieza proposes. "they're out to never allow those bad guys to ever do bad things again. There are only a few ways to accomplish that goal. They appoint themselves judge, jury and executioner."

He pauses for a moment. "I don't know if that's good or



bad — and neither do the characters," he continues. "That's something they will have to learn about as they go along."

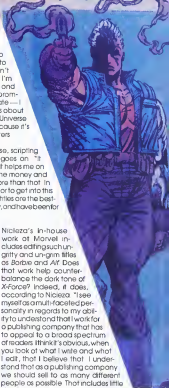
Nicleza says he accepted the assignment to script *X-Force* because it allowed him to explore a side of youthful heroes he couldn't handle in the pages of *New Warriors*. "If I'm going to work in the comics medium — and working for Marvel I understand the parameters under which I am able to operate — I am able to do and say certain things about young super-heroes in the Marvel Universe that I can't do in *New Warriors*, because it's not appropriate to those characters."

"Also, it's a good writing exercise, scripting off someone else's plot," he goes on. "It keeps me fresh and I feel that it helps me on my other writing. Of course, the money and attention is great, but it's more than that. In many ways it's quite an honor to get into the club, because the mutant titles are the best-selling books in the industry, and have been for over a decade."



Nicleza's in-house work at Marvel includes editing such ungritty and ungrim titles as *Barbie* and *All Dogs* that work help counter-balance the dark tone of *X-Force*? Indeed, it does, according to Nicleza. "I see myself as a multi-faceted personality in regards to my ability to understand that I work for a publishing company that has to appeal to a broad spectrum of readers. I think it's obvious, when you look at what I write and what I edit, that I believe that I understand that as a publishing company we should sell to as many different people as possible. That includes little kids, little girls. We need more people in the industry and we won't have older readers unless we cultivate younger readers."

"That's part of my job," Nicleza sums up, "to try to cultivate younger readers. I basically want people to pick up our books and enjoy them." ☐



"It's quite an honor,
because the mu-
tant titles are the
industry's best-
selling books."



VALIANT



From the past to the future, to space and beyond, Valiant comics is exploding on the scene with characters and concepts designed to make even the grimmest reader sit up and beg for more.

Talent, tales, adventures and artwork to astound head up the phenomenon known as Valiant Comics. Valiant has started with the concept that comics can be accepted by a more mass audience, like the comics in Europe or Japan, while still being enjoyed with both entertainment and collecting in mind.

The *Mario Brothers* and *Legend of Zelda* comic books might seem a little off kilter to the average readers of the *X-Men* or *Batman* but when you consider how successful Nintendo is worldwide, it doesn't seem like such a bad choice. This is a great way for Valiant to springboard into the far future with the adventures of *Magnus: Robot Fighter*. The year four

thousand never looked so good.

The stunning design work by Bob Layton (whose *Iron Man* work at Marvel is world renowned) sets the scene for the smashing, crashing and "SQUEEING" of shattered renegade robots by the steel hard hands of Magnus. *Rail* become the first spinoff (or, flipoff if you prefer) in the category of Valiant heroes, where in Japan of 4001 you need not only a hero but a "Grand Mother." What's that mean? It means all of Japan is kept safe and sound by a sentient computer and only one man can keep it safe: *Rail*.

Flowing from the nuclear world of today to the energetic world of tomorrow arises the adventures of the original nuclear man: *Solar*, Man of the Atom—whose exploits begin in the mind of a young boy, to comic book fantasy, beyond, and back! Confused? Don't be, each issue of *Solar* comes with an eight page insert of *Solar's* origin and a bonus two page spread. This not only highlights the incredible artwork of



Bill Schanes, Vice-President of Purchasing for Diamond Comic Distributors thanking Bob Layton after signing 600 inserts, randomly placed in *Previews* #33

HARBINGER

VALIANT



Barry Windsor Smith but combined with the inserts from the first 10 issues forms the largest comic book panel ever!

Science and space aren't always the most incredible things to behold.

Sometimes nature throws them a loop as in the case of the folks at Harbinger. Recessives and Dominants abound in this story of misfits and powers to abuse.

Past and present combine to create the legend of X-O, another misfit whose life was drastically changed by his surroundings. Imagine a barbarian captured by aliens, suffering nearly a millennium of enslavement and experimentation, finally given the means to escape his captors: the X-O sentient battle armor. Designed by aliens for aliens as a war tool against aliens. Imagine now, a man whose sense of right and wrong mesh with the world of today and its problems (not to mention his being encased in a suit designed with near limitless destructive capabilities). That's a mouthful by any standards.

Jim Shooter heads up the talented crew of folks who bring you excitement and adventure every month from Valiant. Talents which include the work of D. David Perlin, Art Nichols, and exciting new-comer David Lapham. The tight inks of Bob Layton and his talented crew, the always beautiful color styles of Janet Jackson, and Jade make Valiant

stand out in the comic industry.

HARBINGER

BRUTALITY
WE

MAGNVS
ROBOT
FIGHTER

SOLAR
MAN OF THE ATOM.

RAI

X-O
MAN OF WAR

GRADING YOUR COMICS

In today's comic book market, grade is one of the most important factors that influences the value of a comic book. There are many grades that fall between the ones listed below; however, the grades presented here are the ones with the most noticeable signs of



MINT. By definition, a mint comic book should appear as if it just came off the press, flawless. There should be no signs of wear made in or outside of the issue. The cover should be centered, spine should be very tight (no creases), and all corners should be sharp. The pages inside should not show any signs of aging. A MINT comic book could be worth up to

100% of the NEAR MINT value. This all depends on the scarcity and desirability of the specific comic in high grade. Most newer (70's to present) issues in Mint condition are usually valued up to 100% of NEAR MINT.



NEAR MINT. A comic book in this grade is very close to MINT. Usually, there is only one small imperfection that will keep this book from being MINT. One of these flaws may be a cover that is slightly off center, one corner may be slightly rounded, or the spine is very tight with

one tiny crease. The pages inside should show almost no signs of aging or wear, with a bright and glossy cover. The comic books listed in this grade are valued at NEAR MINT prices.



VERY FINE. A comic book in this condition will show some minor signs of aging and wear. The spine will have few slight creases, the corners might not all be sharp, and the color may have lost a little luster. There should be no folds, rips, or markings in any way, on any of the

pages. The comics in this grade are valued at 50% to 70% of the NEAR MINT value, again depending on the scarcity and demand for the specific issue.

changes in condition. Grading comics vary from person to person depending on how much they regard certain flaws or imperfections. This guide will serve to help you in the process of grading your comics.



FINE This comic book is a good example of a well read comic. The cover may show some minor fading, the spine shows noticeable signs of wear, pages have slightly discolored - showing signs of age, and the corners are rounded. An issue in this condition may have a slightly loose

cover, especially around the staples. Although there are still no pages without, folds, or missing totally. A FINE comic book will usually be valued at 30% to 35% of the NEAR MINT value.



GOOD/VERY GOOD Comics in this range will have very noticeable signs of aging and wear. There will be spine creases, rounded corners, very minor cuts or tears, minor marks (writing), and faded colors. There

shouldn't be any chunks missing. This is a very common grade for older comics. Comics in GOOD/VERY GOOD condition are valued from 10% to 30% of the NEAR MINT value.



POOR A comic book in this condition has many defects. Some possible flaws include ripped pages, a front spine, a small chunk missing, large creases, and very discolored or faded pages. Any comic with unusual defects are usually considered POOR. Examples include water damage,

rusty staples, light marks, cut out coupons, missing complete pages, writing marks, or stains. A POOR comic is worth less than 10% of the NEAR MINT value.

COMIC BOOK INTELLIGENCE QUIZ

Answers on page 73

How well do you fare?

# Correct	Rank
0-6	GEEK
7-12	ROOKIE
13-18	MASTER
19-24	GURU
25-29	WIZARD
30	HONORARY HERALD OF GALACTUS

- Martian Manhunter is afraid of fire because:

 - fire is his only physical weakness
 - bright light hurts his eyes
 - his family was killed by fire
 - the first Justice League of America HQ was burned down
- Johnny Blaze, the "Original" Ghost Rider, worked for:

 - a construction company
 - a television station
 - a carnival
 - a fire department
- The man who broke Batman's spirit in "Batman: The Cull" was:

 - Deacon Blackfire
 - High Lord Shamus
 - Ra's Al Ghul
 - Randolph Porter
- How did the Silver Surfer's father die?

 - Suicide
 - Galactus ate him (ew, gross)
 - Executed
 - He's not dead
- What is Booster Gold's real name?

 - Jack Turney
 - Ted Cord
 - Justin Hammer
 - This is a trick question
- How many ticks does it take to get to the Toofie Roll center of a Toofie Pop?

 - 3
 - 13
 - 24,091
 - The world will never know
- Arthur Curry is what DC Justice Leaguer's real name?

 - Sgt. Steel
 - Hawkmán
 - Aquaman
 - Vibe
- Which one of these Super Animals were never one of Superman's pets?

 - Streaky, the Super Cat
 - Comet, the Super Horse
 - Krypto, the Super Dog
 - Greek, the Super Monkey
- Marshall Law spends his time:

 - Fighting villains
 - Exploring space
 - Fighting wars
 - Fighting heroes
- In the X-Men/Teen Titans crossover, Darkseid teamed up with:

 - The Master Mold
 - Dark Phoenix
 - Magneto
 - Master Sinner
- Who was the second Robin?

 - Tim Drake
 - Dick Grayson
 - Danny Chase
 - Jason Todd
- The Hobgoblin was driven insane when:

 - His family was killed by the Green Goblin
 - Spider-Man put him in jail
 - He became a true Hobgoblin
 - His identity was discovered
- The Punisher's best friend is a:

 - Telephone
 - Microchip
 - Yo-yo
 - Television
- In Aliens vs Predator:

 - The Aliens won in the end
 - The Predators won in the end
 - The Humans won in the end
 - Galactus ate the planet

15. Which company never published a Star Trek title:
A) Dark Horse
B) Marvel
C) Gold Key
D) DC Comics
16. Which of the following titles has The Punisher never appeared in?
A) Fantastic Four
B) Namor
C) Web of Spider-Man
D) Power Pack
17. Which of these titles never existed?
A) X-Men vs The Fantastic Four
B) X-Men and The Micronauts
C) GI Joe vs The Transformers
D) The Avengers vs The Micronauts
18. The first Marvel Mini-Series ever was:
A) Contest of Champions
B) Falcon
C) Secret Wars
D) Vision and Scarlet Witch
19. The "original" Ghost Rider was a member of this super-team:
A) Avengers
B) Champions
C) Defenders
D) Fantastic Four
20. Dr. Fate recently changed:
A) His costume
B) His gender
C) His underwear
D) Two tets for a five
21. Who was the main villain in DC's Crisis on Infinite Earths?
A) Darkseid
B) Anti-Monitor
C) Beyondler
D) The Black Racer
22. What happened to FRESHMAN in Issue #100 of his series?
A) He was thrown backwards through time
B) He was sucked through a black hole
C) He perished in the heart of the sun
D) He landed in a parallel universe on a similar version of Earth
23. What killed all the inhabitants of Czarnia?
A) The Crisis on Infinite Earths
B) The Kree-Skrull War
C) Loblo
D) Anti-Life Equation
24. Who is Ronald Lithgow?
A) Concrete
B) Monarch
C) The New Weapon X
D) Captain Atom
25. What phrase has Wolverine made famous?
A) I got a hankerin' for some pork products
B) Are you finished with that sandwich?
C) I'm the best there is at what I do
D) You got kookie in your nose
26. How many rings does the Mandarin have?
A) 2
B) 10
C) I don't know, why don't we saw him in half and count them?
D) 5
27. What is the Martian Manhunter's favorite snack product?
A) Fig Newtons
B) Oreo Cookies
C) Magic Middles
D) Pork Rinds
28. The Rocketeer was created by:
A) Cliff Secord
B) Bill Campbell
C) Dave Stevens
D) Louie Depalmer
29. Which of the following Mighty Mouse villains never existed?
A) The Glove
B) Nate the Nose
C) The Smoker
D) The Cow
30. Superman had exiled himself to space because:
A) He became radioactive
B) He lost control of himself
C) Someone almost stole his powers
D) Aliens were hunting him, and he feared for his parent's safety

COVER SHOTS

HOW WELL DO YOU REMEMBER COVERS?
HERE'S YOUR CHANCE TO FIND OUT!

Below, you will find six pieces from covers published over
the last year. Can you tell what covers they are from?

Answers on page 73.



A. _____



B. _____



C. _____



D. _____



E. _____



F. _____

DESIGN YOUR OWN WIZARD COVER

In the space



**Show us your
stuff! Let's see if
you've got what
it takes to make
the cover of
Wizard!**

Covers that you send
will appear in Issue #7.
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categories, so send
in your best.

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MONSIEY, NY 10952-0434

ANSWER PAGE

Answers to the C.B.I.Q. on page 60

1. C 2. C 3. A 4. A 5. D 6. D 7. C 8. D 9. D 10. B 11. D 12. C
13. B 14. C 15. A 16. C 17. D 18. A 19. B 20. B 21. B 22. B
23. C 24. A 25. C 26. B 27. B 28. C 29. B 30. B We hope you scored well.

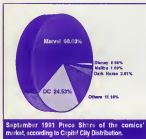
Answers to the Cover Shots contest

A. Armageddon 2001 #2 B. Ghost Rider #18
C. Infinity Gauntlet #3 D. Predator: Big Game #1
E. Uncanny X-Men #277 F. Wolverine #34



WIZARD

MARKET WATCH



★ The letter X continues to be the favorite letter to comic fans everywhere as X-Mania continues to dominate the market nationwide. Leading the pack is Jim Lee's early work on *Uncanny X-Men*, closely followed by Whilce Portacio's work on the same book. Other hot selling items include Rob Liefeld's work on *New Mutants* and *X-Force*, Larry Stroman and Peter David's work on the new *X-Factor*. Alan Davis' return to *Excalibur* has revitalized interest in the title, though there is no major price changes as of yet.

★ Sales on the new *X-Men* book continue to be strong, though the huge print run pretty much ensures there will be no major price increase for quite some time. Definitely worth reading though, as it's one of the funnest books out there to read.

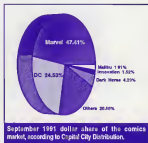
★ The *Silver Surfer* proves you can still be bald and fly around in space naked and still have hot back issues as he and the *Infinity Gauntlet* series continue to sell well. Expect sales to remain high with the debut of "Warlock and the Infinity Watch," an ongoing series slated for later this year.

★ *Ghost Rider*, *Daredevil*, *Hulk*, *Armageddon 2001* and its crossovers, and the "Breakdowns" storyline running through the *Justice League* titles continue to sell very well, thanks to their excellent stories.

★ The not-so-great news is that Dark Horse's line of movie tie-in books (*Predator*, *Terminator*, and *Aliens*) seem to be suffering from lack of interest. Joining that list is Marvel's *Foolkiller* and the TSR based books from DC Comics (*Advanced Dungeons and Dragons*, *Spelljammer*, *Forgotten Realms* and *Dragonlance*).

★ Todd McFarlane's departure from Marvel Comics has truly hurt his back issue sales. Expect possible drops in price on his work on *Incredible Hulk* and *Amazing Spider-Man*. His work on *Spider-Man* continues to sell strongly though, and appears to be unaffected.

★ There's some major hot stuff coming from Marvel later this year. First off, the aforementioned



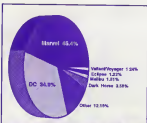
tioned "Warlock and The Infinity Watch" picks up where the Infinity Gauntlet took off. The series starts off with the Gauntlet in Adam Warlock's possession and the high-powered comic deities of the Marvel Universe not too happy about it. This ongoing series will be written by Jim Starlin and the first issue has Angel Medina supplying

the art. Sounds cool. Also keep an eye out for "Hearts of Darkness," a 48 page bookshelf format novel starring Wolverine, Ghost Rider, and the Punisher against Mephisto (...interesting...). Rumor has it that the Punisher will be receiving a new monthly title in early '92. More on that as news develops.

★ Not to be outdone, DC is unleashing Lobo in three, count 'em, three trade paperbacks featuring "The Last Czarnian" (reprinting his smash four issue mini series), "Lobo's Greatest Hits" (reprinting his early appearances in Omega Men, Justice League, Mr. Miracle, Superman and L.E.G.I.O.N.) and finally "The Wisdom of Lobo," a 64 page tribute to Lobo's ethical code, compiled by Lobo himself. Can't wait.

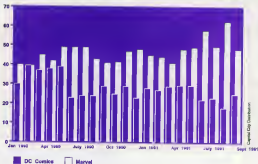
★ Also from DC, check out the "Star Trek: Debt of Honor" comic-sized hardcover by ex-X-Men writer Chris Claremont, Batman vs Deathstroke in Deathstroke The Terminator #7, and "Batman: Master of The Future," sequel to "Gotham By Gaslight."

★ Dark Horse offers us two new movie sequels in The Thing #1 (picking up where John Carpenter's movie left off), and "Star Wars: The Dark Empire," taking place after "Return of The Jedi" film. Both look to be very high quality works.



October 1991 Comic Publishers Marketshare based upon original orders for all merchandise, according to Diamond Comic Distributors.

PERCENTAGE SHARE FOR JANUARY 1990 TO SEPTEMBER 1991





by
**PAT
McCALLUM**

Well, the pinched nerve in my neck turned out to be nothing more than a pulled muscle. Still hurt like hell, though. So I now write this in my apartment which has an unknown substance coming up through the shower drain. Gotta call the landlord, but I'm not sure what to call him yet...

Anyway, on with the section. This month lets talk about the specialty covers that are dominating the comic industry today. Everywhere you look, comics glow in the dark, have "puffed out" foil covers or super triple-quadruple gatefold fold-out... where was I? Ah yes, specialty covers. What is their purpose? Ultimately- to gain new readers. Studies have shown that covers account for 85% of sales of magazines on the newsstand. Which means, chances are you wouldn't have even picked up the magazine if the cover didn't catch your eye. So you would not have read the magazine if it weren't for the cover.

This past year has been a testing ground in the comic shops. Marvel has pushed conventional printing methods to the limits. The debut of covers that were foil stamped, embossed, die cut, glow in the dark, hologrammed and gate-folded brought comics to a higher level. When have you seen a

"Sports Illustrated" with a specialty cover?

I'm sure you all noticed these incredible looking second print books. Well, there's a major reason for second printing a book and a cooler reason why they're so great looking. Take a person who does not collect comics, but he hears that there was a really good one that just came out. So he/she goes to the local comic shop to purchase it only to find out the \$1.50 comic is now \$8.00. This person who was slightly interested in purchasing comics, won't. Here comes the second print, an affordable way for someone who wants to read the book to get it, thus creating a new comic collector.

The reason they look so good is because the company has to fill reorders-when the number is

large enough to go back to presses, and the print run is not as large as the initial order so it's not as expensive to try a new print method. I don't know if you really took a close look at the Ghost Rider #15 second print, but Marvel used three really expensive gimmicks successfully-unbelievable from a printing standpoint. A spot varnished, gold, glow in the dark cover all in



one! Whoa! What if it didn't work and they had tried it on a huge print run-disaster, and why try it on a book that doesn't sell well to begin with? So here is the perfect opportunity to try something new. So you see there are reasons for all this creativeness; the bottom one is- new readers. With new readers and more interest in comics, the industry will blossom.

I don't think anyone can top what Elie Magazine did, however. They sent out 15,000 magazines with a 2-minute Estee Lauder perfume video tape blaster-packed to the cover! Yikes!

THE WIZARD

SURFING YOUR WAY NEXT MONTH!

FEATURING:

- An in-depth talk with hot young artist Ron Lim.
- X-Factor and Incredible Hulk writer Peter David let's us know what's on his mind.
- We sit and chat with Walter and Louise Simonson to see what's on the horizon for this talented pair.
- Plus, many great features you love to see every month.



